



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Public Protection Cabinet

**Steven L. Beshear, Governor**

**Robert D. Vance, Secretary**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **'Building Safety Month' continues with fire safety, awareness week *Campaign aims to keep families, businesses safe***

**Frankfort, Ky.** (May 7, 2013) – May has been proclaimed "Building Safety Month" by state and federal officials to help families and businesses understand the importance of sustaining safe structures and reinforcing the need for modern building codes, strong code enforcement and a well-trained industry workforce.

In issuing his proclamation, Gov. Steve Beshear has asked the Public Protection Cabinet's Department of Housing, Buildings and Construction (DHBC) to oversee the public awareness campaign that was founded by the International Code Council (ICC).

This year's theme is "Code Officials Keep You Safe," and the week of May 6-12 focuses on fire safety.

State Fire Marshal William Swope and his staff in DHBC's Division of Fire Prevention work diligently to eliminate the potential for loss due to fire and other hazards through education, licensing and inspection programs.

"The deputy fire marshals across the state not only investigate the cause and origin of fires and explosions, but also focus on fire prevention education activities in an effort to prevent fires, which is our best defense in home fire safety," said Swope.

Swope's latest endeavor is to identify stakeholders and untapped resources to develop an action plan to decrease fire fatalities and increase the public's awareness of how to prevent home fires. This informal group will meet in the near future to continue those discussions.

"I can't underscore enough the importance of our partnerships with local fire departments and others across the state," said Swope. "Fire prevention is serious business, and we need all stakeholders to work together to spread the message of fire safety and prevention."

The United States Fire Association (USFA) states that the top five fire-safety topics most frequently identified with home fire deaths are smoke alarms,

escape plans, child fire safety, older adult fire safety (cooking and heating) and careless smoking.

The following safety tips are from the USFA:

- Install smoke alarms in each bedroom, outside of sleeping areas and rooms and on each level of your home. A sounding smoke alarm gives you those extra seconds you need to get out of your home.
- Practice an escape plan from every room in the house. Caution everyone to stay low to the floor when escaping from fire and never to open doors that are hot.
- Select a location where everyone can meet after escaping the house. Get out then call for help.
- When home fire sprinklers are used with working smoke alarms, your chances of surviving a fire are greatly increased. Sprinklers are affordable – they can increase property value and lower insurance rates.
- Test your smoke alarm each month and change the batteries at least once a year.
- Portable heaters need their space. Keep anything combustible at least three feet away.
- Install noncombustible one-fourth inch or smaller mesh screening on attic/soffit vents and around elevated wood decks to keep out embers. Install approved or listed spark arrestors on chimneys of solid fuel or liquid fuel burning appliances.
- Consider installing protective shutters or heavy fire-resistant drapes.
- Have a garden hose that is long enough to reach any area of the home and other structures on the property.
- Maintain a “defensible” space around your home by clearing all flammable vegetation a minimum of 30 feet around all structures. Clear dead leaves and branches to leave widely spaced ornamental shrubbery and trees.
- Plant fire prone trees and shrubs away from your home and far enough apart so they won’t ignite one another.

Swope reminds Kentuckians to be aware of fire safety everywhere you go – not just in your home. “Be aware of your surroundings, whether you are in a shopping mall, school building or an entertainment complex. Be sure that you know where the exterior doors are located and how to get there,” he said.

Each week of Building Safety Month spotlights a specific area of building safety. Other weeks will focus on disaster safety and mitigation, backyard and pool safety, and energy and green building.

For additional information on Building Safety Month, visit the ICC’s website at <http://www.iccsafe.org/BSM/Pages/default.aspx>.

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